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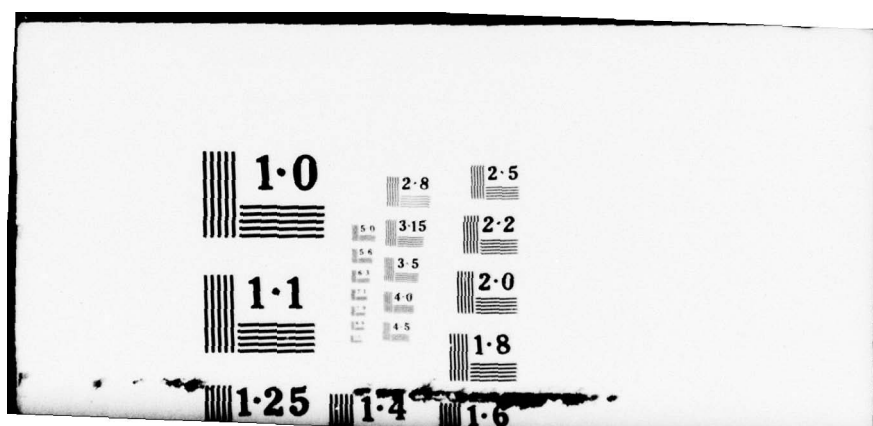
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STUDY REPORT
PMC 73-1

Ronald A. Cadieux
Major USAF

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RESOLVING INTERPERSONAL
CONFLICT IN THE ORGANIZATION

STUDY REPORT

Presented to the Faculty
of the
Defense Systems Management School
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Program Management Course
Class 73-1

by
Ronald A. Cadieux
Major USAF

May 1973

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DEFENSE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

STUDY TITLE: Resolving Interpersonal Conflict in the Organization

STUDY PROBLEM/QUESTION: To examine interpersonal conflict and the techniques for dealing with it in an organizational environment.

STUDENT REPORT ABSTRACT:

Conflict exists in all organizations, its effects on the organization can be highly detrimental. This study examines the impact on the organization of interpersonal conflict. A review of the techniques presently in use for resolving conflict is provided as well as a basic overview of the concepts of Transactional Analysis. Finally, the author provides insights as to how Transactional analysis can be used as a tool for achieving an organizational climate which is conducive to the effective resolution of conflict.

KEY WORDS:

ORGANIZATION ANALYSIS PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

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RESOLVING INTERPERSONAL
CONFLICT IN THE ORGANIZATION

An Executive Summary
of a
Study Report
by

Ronald A. Cadieux
Major USAF

May 1973

Defense Systems Management School
Program Management Course
Class 73-1
Fort Belvoir, Virginia 22060

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to examine interpersonal conflict and the techniques for dealing with it in an organizational environment. The study first surveys the nature of conflict and its impact on the organization. Then the techniques, which are presently in use for dealing with it - some good and some not so good, are examined. Finally, a new psychotherapy technique which shows definite possibilities of use in the conflict arena is discussed.

CONFLICT EXAMINED

Whenever people gather together and interact, be it on a social or business level, a certain degree of interpersonal conflict results. The degree of conflict usually increases with the perceived importance of the task at hand. This conflict may be open and easily discernible, as in the case of loud arguments, or as is more usually the case, it may be covert and unperceived by all but the trained observer. Whatever its form, unresolved conflict is detrimental to the smooth, effective functioning of an organization. If handled properly however, in a healthy organizational environment, conflict can become a creative force for the achievement of organizational goals.

Unresolved conflict may manifest itself in a number of ways. It may cause serious interpersonal communications problems or it may lead to a loss of motivation on the job. Unresolved conflict may also lead to an increase in accident proneness and in some cases to deep psychological disturbances. The ultimate consequence in many instances is the emergence

of an organization which experiences extreme difficulty in reaching decisions.

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

To be effective, an organization must develop the capability to deal constructively with conflict. Modern organizations use a variety of techniques for this purpose.

Among the least effective and yet most frequently used are the techniques of suppression, avoidance and compromise. All three prohibit emotional expression. By not allowing feelings to enter the environment they tend to force the employee to find other means of relieving his inner tensions. The coping mechanisms which develop may seriously impact the effectiveness of the employee's work group.

Other organizations, especially those who adopt a paternalistic attitude toward their employees, may try to use empathy and sympathy as a method of resolving conflict. Supervisors are urged to lend a sympathetic ear to their employees and to let them talk out their problems. However, this technique once again often fails to deal with the basic causes of the conflict, especially when the supervisor himself is a party. An additional danger lies in the fact that the employee may sense a lack of sincerity on the part of management and may develop deep resentments toward the paternalistic attitudes of the management.

The most effective technique presently in use is confrontation - meeting the problem head on, discovering its underlying causes and dealing with them. However, teaching people to deal with conflict in an open and direct manner is no easy task. Laboratory Education or Sensitivity

Training is the most promising method developed thus far for teaching people to deal in an open and direct manner. This type of training however, is expensive and time consuming.

Even when the organization has been willing to send some of its key people for Laboratory Education it has been found to be less than completely effective. Other members of the organization who have not participated in this type of training do not understand what the employees are trying to do and may indirectly force them to suppress the new behavioral patterns which they have learned.

It thus becomes evident that before confrontation can be put to effective use in the organization the whole organizational climate must undergo a change. To achieve this climate change, all of the employees must be given at least a basic understanding of effective interpersonal relations. One tool which I believe can help to accomplish this task is Transactional Analysis.

A NEW TECHNIQUE

Transactional Analysis, or TA, was developed by Eric Berne, an American psychiatrist, to provide people with a basic understanding of their personalities and with a simple, easily understood method for analyzing interpersonal transactions. TA has been the topic of three recent best selling books, Games People Play, I'M OK - YOU'RE OK, and What Do You Say After You Say Hello.

An examination of Transactional Analysis reveals that it can be a significant help in developing an effective organizational climate by:

1. Providing a simple, common language for use in discussing interpersonal conflict.
2. Providing the individual with a conceptual framework in which he can examine his feelings toward others and gain insight into the underlying cause of these feelings.
3. Helping the individual to understand his "life position" and the impact which that position has on his everyday dealings with other members of the organization.
4. Helping the individual to develop a life position which allows him to face reality and to deal with it effectively.

It is not my contention that TA should be used to replace Laboratory Education but rather that a basic course in TA which would require less than eight hours of company time be provided to all employees. This would provide the members of the organization with a tool which could help them in developing more effective interpersonal competence. In this way, the entire organization could be prepared to make maximum effective use of the skills developed by some of its key people through Sensitivity Training.

Transactional Analysis is not a panacea, but it may well serve as the essential link in the chain for developing an organization capable of dealing with conflict in a truly constructive manner.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to a number of people for their support of and contribution to the efforts involved in writing this paper. My thanks to the Reverend George M. Murray, Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast for first introducing me to the concepts of Transactional Analysis and for providing an organizational atmosphere where these concepts could be explored and used. Appreciation is also due Dr. W. Inge for his help in training laboratories and for his support of my flounderings when exploring the interpersonal underworld. Major John Taylor of the DSMS faculty provided valuable guidance and assistance in preparing this study and Captain James Bexfield, USAF helped immeasurably in editing and reviewing this manuscript.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal conflict exists in all organizations. This fact may be disputed by many managers who perceive their organizations as smooth functioning groups where overt, emotional outbursts are almost never experienced. However, this lack of overt outbursts does not necessarily indicate an absence of conflict within the organization. Rather, it may simply mean that the organizational climate is such that the open expression of emotions is not allowed and thus conflict becomes covert and may manifest itself in a variety of ways, most of which are detrimental to the effective functioning of the organization.

Mary Parker Follett, one of the early pioneers in the behavioral science movement, was one of the first to recognize that conflict within the organization could not be avoided. She advocated that "Instead of condemning it, we should put it to work for us...." (16:23)

The purpose of this study is to examine interpersonal conflict and the techniques for dealing with it in an organizational environment. We will first look at the nature of interpersonal conflict and its impact on the organization. Then, the various techniques which are presently in vogue for dealing with conflict will be examined. Finally, a new tool to aid in the resolution of conflict will be explored.

ABSTAINER

This study represents the views, conclusions, and recommendations of the author and does not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Defense Systems Management School or the Department of Defense.

CHAPTER II

CONFLICT EXAMINED

Fighting, hostility, and controversy, all of which are evidence of conflict, are everyday fare for individuals and groups. (14:123) These symptoms often do not openly evidence themselves but no matter how much people try to keep interpersonal problems out by ignoring them or covering them up, they will turn up in subtle forms such as loss of motivation, fatigue, or preoccupation with outside tasks. Even worse, they may become entangled directly with the solution of the task at hand, thus making it extremely difficult to separate and handle effectively. (19)

Various types of behavior result from interpersonal conflict. Occasionally, the conflict may manifest itself as open hostility between individuals or between an individual and the group. However, the behavioral norms of most groups are such that open conflict of this type is frowned upon and the emotional aspects of conflict are suppressed. This suppression may lead the individual to express his hostility in terms of technical and intellectual disagreement with other members of the group. (1) Although this behavior is more acceptable, such expressions of conflict are much more difficult to resolve. Many groups have found it difficult to competently deal with the tasks at hand because of an individual who constantly raises technical and philosophical objections to any proposed solution.

The sources of conflict are many and varied. Conflict may occur as a result of differences in basic values of the individuals or as a result of perceived differences in knowledge or status. Often conflict results from strong competition for promotion or to sell one's ideas. People have their own ideas about how to get things done and when their

ideas go against the grain of those in charge, conflict results. Still more difficult to explain is the conflict which results from personality clashes. (8:162) "I don't know what it is but every time Ed opens his mouth the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.... I just can't stand that guy." Or, "I think he's dead wrong in trying to do it that way, but somehow I just can't bring myself to tell him so."

Individual needs may also play a key role in the development of conflict. The individual with a strong need for belongingness and love may perceive any disagreement with his contributions to the group as a personal threat and an attempt to exclude him from the "inner circle". The esteem needs may also prove to be strong motivators to conflict.

Suppressed and unresolved conflict may seriously impact the effectiveness of the organization. Rensis Likert in his book, New Patterns of Management, provides evidence that there is an "appreciable relationship" between the amount of conflict which employees feel exists between them and their supervisors and the level of productivity within the organization. (13:9) Unresolved conflict may manifest itself in a variety of ways. Communications difficulties are often the "result" of interpersonal conflict instead of the "cause". The individual who feels himself in conflict with the group or members of the group may display his animosity by not bothering to try to make his point clear; he may ignore telephone messages from other members of the group, later providing some weak excuse of it having slipped his mind. Another frequently seen tactic is misreading or misinterpreting messages. Unresolved conflict may result in a loss of motivation to work on the tasks assigned to the group. The individual may decide that he will do just what's expected of him and no more. He may find that other

duties and commitments are much stronger than he anticipated. He discovers that he has to leave the meeting early or arrive late because of conflicts in his schedule. His loss of motivation may express itself in an actual feeling of physical tiredness - the handling and suppression of emotional feelings is hard work.

The individual's response to the conflict which he feels may be expressed as indiscriminate opposition to suggestions by other members of the group. If he can't find direct fault with the idea, he may employ a stalling tactic such as suggesting that it be turned over to a committee for further study.

The ultimate result is a group which has constant difficulty in reaching decisions. It becomes impossible to obtain a consensus of the members and the group finds that the only way that it can progress is to turn to a majority rules type of decision making. In this situation, the minority may not feel committed to the cause and may seriously lack motivation to see the decision implemented. (19) It is often the case that the forces toward ineffectiveness operate most strongly during the important decision making meetings when major policy decisions are needed which will significantly impact the organization. (1)

The impact of unresolved conflict on the individual may also be quite severe. Evidence at the psychiatric level indicates that much psychological illness has its roots in personal inability to relieve conflict through the "talk-out" approaches that healthy people employ. Some of the more commonly observed results of swallowing the tensions caused by unresolved conflict on the job are "kicking the dog" (or the wife, or the kids), excessive fatigue, and a significant increase in the accident

proneess of the individual. (8:164)

We have seen in this chapter that conflict exists in a variety of forms in all organizations. If the organization is unable to deal with conflict effectively, serious consequences result and the effectiveness of the organization is badly hampered. However, conflict can be used to help build the individual personality as well as to distort and destroy it. (2) The effective organization is characterized by an "extraordinary capacity" to deal constructively with conflict and to resolve it. (11:204)

In the next chapter, we shall examine some of the techniques presently in use in modern organizations for dealing with conflict.

CHAPTER III

APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH CONFLICT

An examination of the managerial literature of today indicates that there are many methods presently in use for dealing with conflict. The effectiveness of these methods varies widely. For purposes of discussion, these methods will be broken into three general categories - suppression, avoidance, and compromise; empathy and sympathy; and confrontation. In this chapter, each of the categories will be examined and its effectiveness evaluated.

SUPPRESSION, AVOIDANCE AND COMPROMISE

The main concern of organizations which practice the techniques of suppression, avoidance and compromise is to keep personal emotions to a minimum. "Let's stick to the job boys...."

The manager who advocates the technique of suppression will simply not allow overt conflict to permeate the work situation. "We just don't do that here...." If by chance, open conflict does appear on the job, it will be quickly cut off by the supervisor and the individuals involved will be given a "chewing out" or "read the riot act". By the same token, if the supervisor finds himself in conflict with another employee who is not his subordinate, he will quickly refer the problem to his boss for a win-lose decision. (8:30ff) Such a climate can be extremely detrimental to the employee's psychological well-being and a host of coping mechanisms will quickly manifest themselves.

The manager who employs avoidance as a means of handling conflict will usually try to keep himself out of the situation completely. If he

is confronted with a conflict situation, he will usually try to withdraw from it as quickly as possible. If his opinion or judgement is requested, he will try to maintain a neutral position, and if that doesn't work, he may resort to double talk. (8:98) This type of supervisor may best be typified by the famous three monkeys - see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. This technique is usually applied equally to conflicts between his subordinates and to conflicts which he experiences with other members of the organization. Once again, emotion is not allowed to penetrate the situation and the impact on the individuals concerned is often disastrous.

The compromising manager realizes that conflict can be detrimental to the organization and thus he tries to do something about it. Once again, the key is "keep it unemotional". This individual will rarely meet conflict head on, rather he advocates a cooling off period. He may then talk to each of the opponents in private in an attempt to find a neutral ground where a compromise can be reached. The emphasis is on the "facts", not on emotions. If the individuals concerned cannot reach a compromise, then the usual solution is to transfer one of them to a new location. (8:121ff) Compromise may be an effective technique in the political arena where the individuals are committed to a group position and see themselves as the standard bearer of a concept. However, when the conflict is a personal one, individual to individual, the compromise technique does little to resolve the underlying problems and feelings. Meeting the other guy half way may often lead to a solution which is less than optimal.

At this point the reader may be ready to reject the techniques listed thus far as "old fashioned" and no longer relevant to today's managerial elite. For this reason, I would like to discuss briefly the

results of a study conducted by Argyris and reported in the Harvard Business Review. (1) The study was conducted among the top executives of six companies ranging in size from a major electronics firm with 40,000 employees. Argyris found that "the actual behavior of top executives during decision making meetings often does not jibe with their attitudes and prescriptions about effective executive action". One of the norms which seemed to be very important to all of the executive groups studied was, "Cognitive rationality is to be emphasized, feelings and emotions are to be played down". As a result of this norm, the executives felt that emotional disagreement should be kept out of their meetings and that they should stick to the facts. When executives immediately below these top people were asked to evaluate the top level "87% felt that conflicts were seldom coped with; and when they were, the attempts tended to be inadequate".

EMPATHY AND SYMPATHY

The advocates of the sympathetic approach to conflict resolution acknowledge the emotional aspects of conflict and often display a basic knowledge of the behavioral sciences. Maintenance of harmony is paramount; let the man get it off his chest, be a good listener. (8:66) This is the approach which was frequently found in the old foreman's handbook or some similar guide to leadership. Gordon Lippitt in his book, Organizational Renewal, (14) urges the leader to look at the issues coldly and at the people involved warmly, to use empathy to recognize the plight of both sides without necessarily agreeing with either. (14:124)

Pfiffner and Fels in their book, The Supervision of Personnel, (17)

advocate that an atmosphere of "managerial empathy" be developed within the organization and that when discussing a problem the supervisor should determine the employee's needs and deal with them.

The emphasis of this technique is on accentuating the positive, and "pouring oil on troubled waters". If all else fails, the employee can always be sent off to the company psychologist for a higher level dose of sympathy. (8:66ff)

This method of conflict resolution, although an improvement over the techniques which rule out feelings and emotions completely, has a number of shortcomings. First, it presupposes that the manager himself is not involved in the conflict. He's just the "big brother" helping the "guys" resolve their problems. This technique may also fail to uncover the underlying cause of the conflict because the goal is harmony and once that is achieved - all is well. The advocates of this position feel that confrontation might tend to threaten the stability of the warm relationships within the group. (15:57)

The empathetic technique may achieve a few moderate successes but in most instances the employee senses a lack of sincerity on the part of his supervisor and may develop deep resentments toward the paternalistic attitudes of the organization. At best, he is still left with the dilemma of not really knowing or understanding why he can't stand the "guy on the next machine". In any case, his boss goes home to "kick the dog" because he's spent so much time creating harmony and being a nice guy that he hasn't been able to resolve his own conflicts.

CONFRONTATION

"Many lines of evidence converge with one another and support the

conclusion that confrontation of conflict is, in fact, the most mature approach to its management and resolution." (8:164) Confrontation involves getting the conflict out into the open, looking it squarely in the eye, and dealing with its underlying causes. In addition to relieving the inherent tensions in a conflict situation, there is also evidence to indicate that "Confrontation of conflict may serve to arouse the achievement motivation." (15:56)

The development of this technique within an organization is not an easy task for the basic precepts run contrary to the traditional norms of our society - emotions have no place in business ... don't rock the boat ... let's all work in harmony to get the job done. Rensis Likert tells us that there are three characteristics of a successful organization:

1. It should have the machinery established to deal with conflict, not avoid it.
2. The personnel of the organization should be skilled in the process of effective interaction.
3. There should be a high degree of confidence and trust among organization members and high group loyalty. (13:117)

This is the point where most management texts leave off. It is assumed that the effective manager will simply take the precepts of conflict resolution by confrontation, incorporate them into his management philosophy, and all will be well ... end of problem.

Not quite - for as anyone who has attempted to deal with an emotionally charged interpersonal problem will attest, it is an extremely difficult task - one which requires a great deal of courage and self-confidence.

The first step in developing the ability to confront conflict is for the manager to rid himself of the old norms; to do so usually requires that he experience the ineffectiveness of these norms at the "gut" level. Then, he must be placed in a culture where new values can be learned, practiced, and protected until the manager feels confident in their use. Such a culture is composed of people who are striving to develop "authentic relationships" and to achieve "psychological success". (3) Authentic relationships can be said to "exist when an individual can behave in such a way as to increase his self awareness and esteem and, at the same time, provide an opportunity for others to do the same Psychological success is the experience of realistically challenging situations that tax one's capabilities." (3)

The method for obtaining the supportive climate necessary to learn these new skills is through Laboratory Education - or Sensitivity Training as it is sometimes called. The objective of Laboratory Education is to develop effective, reality-centered, leaders. In recent years, Laboratory Training has become one of the most talked about, experimented with, lauded, and questioned educational experiences available to managers. (3) The basic unit of the laboratory is the T-group (T for training). In this group, the manager finds himself having to deal with difficult interpersonal problems in a situation where his power, control and organizational influences are at a minimum. The end result is a leader who is in touch with reality, the reality of himself and of the situation at hand.

It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt to fully describe Laboratory Education and its impact on the individual. The author has participated in a number of these laboratories and has come to the

conclusion that it is virtually impossible to communicate the meaningfulness of the experiences which can occur in the laboratory situation. Rather the reader is referred to the writings of some of the better known specialists in this area such as Carl Rogers, Chris Argyris and Dorothy Stock, to name only a few.

Although Laboratory Education has proved to be an effective technique for preparing executives to deal realistically with interpersonal conflicts, a major problem is yet to be resolved within most organizations. The problem is how to provide an organizational atmosphere in which the skills learned in the laboratory can be put to effective use. Argyris, in his article, T-Groups for Organizational Effectiveness (3), reports that in his studies he has found a "significant shift" on the part of the executives participating in T-groups toward a set of values which encouraged them to handle feelings and emotions, deal with group maintenance problems, and develop greater feelings of responsibility on the part of their subordinates for the effectiveness of the organization. Argyris' studies also indicate that the impact of the Laboratory Education continued at a high level for a period in excess of six months after the training; by the tenth month a "fade-out" began to appear, however, A study of this problem led to the conclusion that the executives had not really lost their skills for dealing with interpersonal problems, but that they were forced to suppress some of their learning because the major corporate executives who had not been participants in the training, did not understand them.

This study led to the conclusion that "Change is not going to be effective and permanent until the total organization accepts the new

values." (3) In other follow-up studies reported by Blake and Mouton, it was reported that the trainees found that the most difficult person to confront is the "boss". (8:165) How do you tell your boss that his attitude is "bugging" you, especially when you know he hasn't been to Laboratory Education. It is quite often a case of being afraid to confront the boss for fear of "getting in dutch". (8:166) Fleishman reports that subordinates tend to use the same leadership style that their boss tends to use regardless of the training they receive." (2:67ff) The obvious solution is for the boss to participate in Laboratory Training also. However, such training is expensive both in terms of dollars and in time away from the job. The average Laboratory usually lasts about a week and piece-meal Laboratories, held part-time in the plant, are usually not effective. Thus, most large organizations find it difficult to train enough of their supervisors to effectively impact the climate of the organization. The top level executives are often too busy to take the time off from the job.

And so we find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, we have what is reported by some of the top behavioral scientists of the day as the best method for handling conflict. On the other, we find that the technique is very difficult to establish in the organization because of the extensive training needed to teach people to interact in an open, supportive way.

The next chapters will discuss a new technique which I feel may be of help to us in developing the required organizational climate.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

In recent years a new psychoanalytic technique has appeared on the horizon which has proven to be a highly effective tool for laymen and professionals alike. This technique is generally known as TA or Transactional Analysis. Little can be found in current management literature about TA, for it is generally considered to belong in the realm of social psychiatry rather than industrial psychology. However, after having explored this technique for the past few years on a personal basis, I feel that it may have definite value in the world of the corporate organization.

Because Transactional Analysis may be a new concept to the student of management, I would like to pause briefly to discuss TA, its origins and precepts, before proceeding in the next chapters with a discussion of its application in the industrial organization.

THE ORIGINS OF TA

Transactional Analysis is the brain child of Eric Berne, an American psychiatrist, who developed the technique in the late 1950's and early 60's. (9:45) Berne's primary motive for developing TA was to provide the therapist and the patient with a simple, easily understood method for analyzing interpersonal transactions. He felt that psychiatry needed a language that both the therapist and the patient could understand. (10:51) The technique was designed to deal with here and now social interaction in layman's language. TA was first reported to the general public in Berne's 1961 book, Transactional Analysis in

Psychotherapy; however, it did not really begin to come into vogue until Berne published Games People Play in 1964. This was followed in 1972 by What Do You Say After You Say Hello, which was published posthumously. Berne's analysis technique became increasingly more complex with each stage in its development. For this reason, its fullest application is still restricted to qualified therapists.

In 1969, Thomas Harris, a student of Berne's for over ten years, and a founder of the Institute for Transactional Analysis, published I'm OK - You're OK, which provided a simpler, more easily understood, version of TA. Harris' book has gained wide spread acceptance among the general public and will be used as the basis for our discussion in the remainder of this study.

THE PRINCIPLES OF TA

As a result of the work of Dr. Wilder Penfield, an eminent neurosurgeon from McGill University, it has been learned that recorded in the human brain are not only memories of past events, but also the feelings that were associated with those events. (12:7) These recorded experiences and feelings are available for replay today in as vivid a form as when they happened and provide much of the data which controls our everyday transactions. (12:11)

The basic unit of social intercourse is called a "transaction". (6:29) When two people meet, sooner or later one of them will say something or give some indication acknowledging the presence of the other. This is called a "transactional stimulus". The other person will then do or say something which is related to the stimulus and that is called a

"transactional response". The stimulus and response form a transaction. TA is a method of examining these transactions and of systematizing the information derived into words which have the same meaning to everyone involved.

According to Berne, each person's personality is composed of three "ego-states" - PARENT, ADULT, and CHILD. (12:13) Transactions take place between the separate ego-states of persons rather than between their total personalities. (9:45) (See Figure 1)

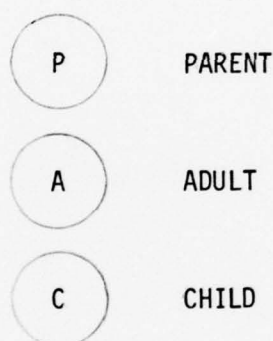


Figure 1 - The Personality

The PARENT is a huge collection of recordings in the brain of unquestioned, or imposed external events perceived by the person in his early years of life. Everything the young child saw his parents or parent substitutes do and everything he heard them say is recorded here in an unedited form. Here recorded are all the rules and laws the child heard from his parents and saw in their living ... "don't ever carry an axe with the blade up" "you are judged by the company you keep" "the best people are Methodists".... "never trust a Black Man". (12:18ff)

While the external events are being recorded in the PARENT, another recording is being made in the CHILD. This is a recording of the internal events, the responses which the little person experienced as a result of the parental stimulus. Most of these responses are recorded as feelings. Many of the feelings are negative as a result of the constant corrections and scoldings which the young child receives during the "civilizing process" of his early years. Even the child of kind, loving, well-meaning parents has a large collection of negative, or "I'M NOT OK" feelings. In the CHILD is also recorded a vast store of positive data. Here reside creativity, curiosity, the desire to know and explore, and the glorious feelings of first discoveries. Thus the "I'M OK" happy, butterfly chasing little boy is also represented here. (12:24ff)

The ADULT ego state is the data processing computer, which grinds out decisions after computing the information from three sources: the PARENT, the CHILD, and the data which the ADULT has been gathering from the immediate environment. One of the important functions of the ADULT is to examine the data in the PARENT to see whether or not it is true and still applicable today, and then to accept it or reject it. Similarly, the data in the CHILD is examined to see whether or not the feelings are appropriate to the present situation. In the grown person all three ego states operate interchangeably, often in rapid succession. People actually choose to operate out of a particular ego state. (9:47) Unfortunately, especially in the case of conflict, either the PARENT or the CHILD often becomes the dominant state. For effective resolution of conflict the individuals concerned must "turn on" their ADULT.

According to the precepts of TA, people transact to exchange "strokes". A stroke is a unit of recognition and may be positive, such as a smile or word of praise, or negative, such as a frown or verbal criticism. But whatever form they take, strokes are a necessity of life for most people. Young children need many strokes for sheer survival and will lap up any kind they can get - positive or negative. Once grown, these people will continue to seek out the particular diet of strokes which they were raised on.

Harris says that during the second or third year of life each child develops a "life position", and that there are four possible life positions which a person can take with respect to himself and others:

1. I'M NOT OK - YOU'RE OK
2. I'M NOT OK - YOU'RE NOT OK
3. I'M OK - YOU'RE NOT OK
4. I'M OK - YOU'RE OK

The child will normally accept one of the first three positions and once selected it will stay with him for the rest of his life unless he consciously changes it to the fourth position. (12:43) There are two ways in which people may attempt to live out their selected life position; the first is to live out a "life script" which confirms the NOT OK and may call for a life of seeking negative strokes; the second, and more common way, is to develop a "counter script" with borrowed lines from the PARENT: YOU CAN BE OK - IF. Script analysis is a highly complex and specialized technique used by professional therapists to uncover early decisions made unconsciously as to how life will be lived. For a more detailed discussion of this phase of TA, the interested reader is

referred to bibliography item 7.

This examination of Transactional Analysis has of necessity been very brief as it was not my intention to turn the reader into a qualified analyst, but merely to provide an introduction to TA and its language. TA is a simple, easily understood, technique which can be used by almost anyone with a minimum of training. Harris claims that the principles of P-A-C (PARENT - ADULT - CHILD) can be taught to children as young as four or five years old. (12:155) I have used P-A-C with my own ten and eleven year old children with what I consider reasonable success. In 1966, a program was initiated in Sacramento by Dennis Marks to teach P-A-C to retarded children with IQs in the 30 - 75 range. Marks has reported considerable success in using TA to solve some of his most difficult problems with the children. (12:171)

A number of training courses have been conducted in Transactional Analysis since its development in the early 60's. Among those trained in its use in addition to psychiatrists and medical doctors, have been social workers, probation officers, teachers, clergyman, nurses, and personnel managers. (12:xvi)

CHAPTER V
ANALYZING THE TRANSACTION

Now that we have developed a feel for the language and precepts of TA, let us move to the central technique of TA: using the language to analyze a transaction.

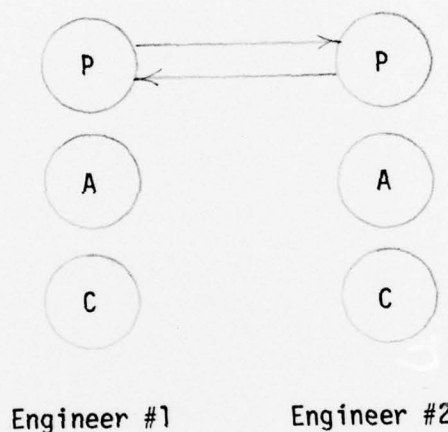


Figure 2 - PARENT - PARENT Transaction

Life around the office abounds with every conceivable transaction. Let us examine a typical conversation between two engineers.

Engineer 1 - Boy, is Joe ever fouled up.

Engineer 2 - He sure is; he never does anything right.

Engineer 1 - If I were him I'd give up and go dig ditches.

Engineer 2 - He'll never make it around here.

These transactions are illustrated in Figure 2 and represent a PARENT - PARENT transaction. The two engineers are exchanging the kind of "ain't it awfuls" they heard from their parents in childhood. The

transaction thus far is a "passtime" and could go on for hours, without useful purpose. If engineer number 2 had provided an ADULT response such as, "I wonder if there's anything we can do to help him," then the transaction would either have had to shift to the ADULT - ADULT level or would have come to an end. The first rule of communication in TA says that "When stimulus and response on the P-A-C transactional diagram make parallel lines, the transaction is complementary and can go on indefinitely." (12:70)

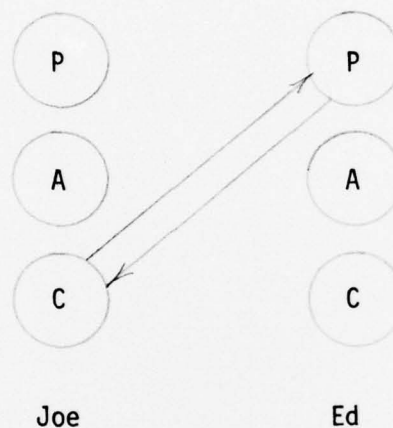


Figure 3 - CHILD - PARENT Transaction

Another type of complementary transaction is one between the PARENT and CHILD. Let's listen in on another conversation.

Joe - (After a fight with the boss) I could bust that guy right in the nose.

Ed - If I were you, I'd quit.

Joe - I just don't know what to do

Ed - Now if you'll take a few words of advice from an old hand around here

This transaction is diagrammed in Figure 3 and is another of the type which could go on for hours with each playing his role and getting his strokes.

The kind of transaction that causes trouble is the crossed transaction. The second rule of communication in TA tells us that "when stimulus and response cross on the P-A-C transactional diagram, communication stops." (12:81) Let's take a look at a crossed transaction.

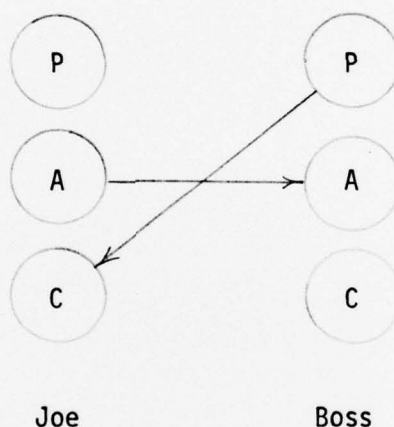


Figure 4 - Crossed Transaction

Joe - I'm going to stay a little late tonight, Boss. I have to finish that cost report for tomorrow.

Boss - Why do you always leave these things for the last G-- D-- minute.

The stimulus here was ADULT, but the boss turned the response over to the PARENT. A transaction such as this can be the start of interpersonal conflict. If Joe has strong unpleasant feelings recorded

in his CHILD, he may become quite upset about this situation. However, if both men are trained in the precepts of TA, they have the tools to quickly analyze the situation and bring the ADULT back into the transaction. Realizing the impact which his boss' statement has had on his CHILD, Joe might make a statement such as, "Boy, that last remark really hooked my CHILD." The boss being also trained in TA would be aware of the significance of this and might reply with his ADULT and a statement like, "Sorry, Joe, I guess my PARENT was taking charge again, - is there anything I can do to help keep you from getting in these last minute time crunches?"

If Joe has developed an I'M NOT OK - YOU'RE OK life position, he may be overly sensitive to all forms of criticism, either direct or implied. Even such a simple statement as, "Hey, Joe, when do you think you'll have that report finished?" may be improperly perceived. The stimulus here was basically ADULT, but from Joe's NOT OK position, it may be taken as "implied criticism" of his ability to get his work done on time. The perceived criticism is a PARENT stimulus. Thus we have a "duplex transaction" as illustrated in Figure 5.

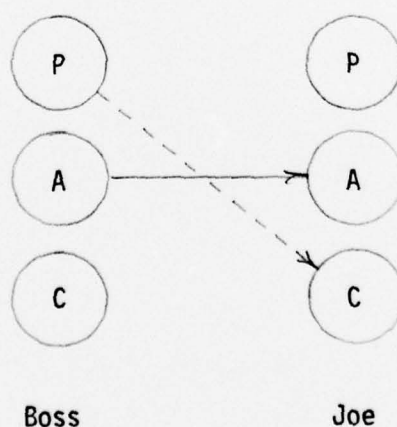


Figure 5 - Duplex Transaction

This is the type of situation which makes Joe feel uncomfortable with the guy at the next desk and yet not be able to understand why. Once again a knowledge of TA can help Joe understand why he feels the way he does in certain situations. Once aware of his NOT OK life position, he can do something about it by turning on his ADULT and hopefully shifting to an I'M OK - YOU'RE OK position.

This has been a very simplistic example of the potential use of Transactional Analysis in an organization but it does illustrate several important points. First, a basic knowledge of TA can make a person aware of how he feels and why he feels that way. Second, a knowledge of the terms of TA provides both parties in the conflict with a simple, mutually understood language to use in dealing with their interpersonal problems.

CHAPTER VI

TOWARD DEVELOPING AN "OK" ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

We have seen thus far that conflict exists as an everyday part of organizational life, and that this conflict if improperly resolved can be detrimental to the organization. Additionally, it has become evident that of all the methods for resolving conflict presently in use direct confrontation appears to be the technique which has the greatest promise for true effectiveness. However, developing the interpersonal skills needed to effectively confront conflict is a difficult task. Laboratory Education has proven effective in this area but the skills learned in the laboratory are difficult to employ in the work environment unless something can be done to develop an organizational climate which is conducive to effective personal interaction.

Transactional Analysis can help in the development of an effective climate by:

1. Providing a simple, common language for use in discussing interpersonal conflict.
2. Providing the individual with a conceptual framework in which he can examine his feelings toward others and gain insight into the underlying cause of these feelings.
3. Helping the individual to understand his "life position" and the impact which that position has on his everyday dealings with other members of the organization.
4. Helping the individual to develop an I'M OK - YOU'RE OK life position which allows him to face reality and to deal with it effectively.

Once this climate is achieved it is then possible for the key, laboratory trained, supervisors to mold and transform the organizational norms to allow for the constructive use of conflict. At this point, we are then ready to accept Ms Follett's challenge of "putting conflict to work for us" by using conflict to bring out new ideas and opinions and to foster creativity within the organization.

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